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Crystal Clear:

An Analysis of Swarovski Crystals' Human Resource Management Strategy and the Influence of Generation Y

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to develop a better understanding of how Generation Y's new expectations of their work life is affecting change in Human Resource management strategies. Swarovski, an Austrian based crystal company, will be used as an example of a business that has developed successful human resource strategy in the face of global market recruitment and retention changes. McKinsey's 7S Framework and Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions will provide basic models for how Swarovski can best approach both a global market of talent and the new demands of Generation Y recruits. Through this analysis it can be determined that Swarovski's focus on innovation is essential to their successful strategy overall. Additionally, it can be recommended that they look to become an Employer of Choice for continued future achievement.

INTRODUCTION

The answer to "How can you attract and retain top talent?" is changing dramatically as Generation Y begins to command the workforce, and companies must rebrand their recruitment and retention strategies to meet this new demand. Swarovski faces not only this challenge, but also is tasked with creating an appealing workplace for their employees located across the globe, while holding true to one overall company culture.

Generation Y (also known as Millennials) are the demographic cohort born in the 1980's up until as young as the very early 2000's. They are the first generation to have spent their entire lives in the digital environment and therefore information technology profoundly effects how they live and work (Bolton, 2013). Since technology has always been easily accessible to this generation, companies must change their strategies to adapt to technological advancements. Generation Y workers have vast capabilities to bring about dramatic positive change in a company - mobilizing their networks, quickly analyzing volumes of relevant information, pulling together solutions and generally working against the status quo. However true commitment is needed and without engagement at work, Gen Y employees won't utilize their unique skills to make a difference. Managers today need to not only appeal to Gen Y workers' desire to be change agents, they also need to give them enough influence to initiate and implement their innovative ideas. When leaders create Human Resource Management Strategies they need to absolutely ensure they are allowing employees to span organizational boundaries and enable young workers through coaching rather than directing (Nayar, 2013).

To look at how Swarovski approaches these changing demands a brief history of Swarovski will be presented to create a better understanding of the company and what was fundamental in its development over the past one hundred years. Following this the McKinsey '7-S' Model will be utilized to fully examine

Swarovski's strategy on each individual level of the model. This will also allow the strategy to be analyzed as comprehensive functions, as this model is built on the foundation that each function is interdependent on the others and lacks hierarchy.

As a global company Swarovski faces the changing demands of the workforce while also facing the challenge of appealing to potential employees in the many countries in which they operate business. Therefore, following an in-depth examination of the company's strategy, the use of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions Framework will be utilized to pinpoint challenges from globalization and identify any tactics the company uses to combat these. This framework can also be used to identify if the cultural dimensions of the company are appealing to Generation Y recruits.

Finally, after a brief look at competitors' strategies, this paper will try to determine if Swarovski has a valuable strategy currently in place and offer any potential recommendations to improve its policies.

HISTORY

In 1895, in the small Austrian town of Wattens, a man named Daniel Swarovski was driven to create crystal that would be accessible to more people. More than a hundred years later Swarovski crystals are globally recognized as the world's leading manufacturer of cut crystal. The company, whose headquarters still remain in Wattens, continues to be guided by Daniel's innovative spirit and drive to create a 'a diamond for everyone'. Swarovski is still run by family members, currently the fifth generation, and has grown tremendously throughout the years using the brand's innovative foundation to become a multi-brand, multi-billion euro business with a brand presence in over 170 countries. Today Swarovski includes companies such as Swareflex for glass reflectors and road safety solutions, Tyrolit for tools, Swarovski Optik for binoculars, telescopes and even scopes of hunting rifles, Swarovski watches, and most recently in 2011 its own perfume line (Swarovski Website, 2015).

While Swarovski is a company with physical products, they have embedded these products into the everyday culture of our society. Their lighting designs are showcased from the Metropolitan Opera House in New York to the chandelier in the Palace of Versailles. Thousands of Swarovski crystals adorn the iconic costumes of Marilyn Monroe in "Diamonds are a Girl's Best Friend" and more recently Nicole Kidman in "Moulin Rouge". Without realizing it Swarovski has built its brand around our society and behind that brand are thousands of people working in departments ranging from management to sales and production to marketing (Swarovski Website, 2015). The development of the company into numerous branches certainly has expanded Swarovski around the globe with employees working in every corner. Over 25,000 employees work solely for the Swarovski Crystal Business and another 30,000 under the Swarovski Group. With their founder's innovative spirit driving the company's success it is crucial that Swarovski continues to hire and retain the creative minds that will lead the company down the next path of innovation. Modernizing their recruitment strategy, as generational trends alter, is imperative to obtaining this talent. Swarovski makes an excellent case because they have been developing and growing as a company for over 100 years and have established very strong Human Resource Management Strategies to match their company's culture while appealing to the potential workforce.

STRATEGY

Moving into the next generation of recruitment and retention Swarovski needs to assess and prepare a complex and comprehensive Human Resource Management Strategy. Recruitment is the process of attracting an adequate pool of qualified candidates to sustain qualified and talented staff for specific job

requirements now and in the future (Cunningham, 2015). In recruiting Generation Y candidates it is crucial that managers are creative and adjust to changing economic and social environments.

In the following pages this paper will approach each of McKinsey's 7 S's. This framework allows for the analysis and recommendation to be holistic, as the lack of hierarchy among the factors demonstrates that each part of the organization is interconnected and dependent on the success on progress of the other parts.

Strategy

The high brand awareness of Swarovski keeps it competitive among consumer markets. Within recruitment, through the same strategy of high awareness, they are also able to be competitive by appealing to mass markets and having strong brand viability. Swarovski is active and works to stay relevant on multiple social media platforms. The company currently uses Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn pages dedicated solely to career recruitment and engagement. These practices keep them not only relevant in the sea of recruiting companies, but it also allows them to demonstrate their competitive advantage to their talent pool. What is also vital about having a high social media strategy is that Swarovski becomes globally visible as an employer. Swarovski operates in 170 countries and it is crucial that they keep an international perspective on their recruitment strategy.

Structure

Swarovski has always been and continues to be a family owned and operated business. Five fifth-generation Swarovski family members run the executive board and they pride themselves on having kept this aspect of their structure throughout development. It is the nature of a family company to think in terms of generations rather than in calendar quarters and this creates a long-term orientation in their structure and daily practices (Swarovski Group, 2013).

Having multiple companies under the Swarovski brand, it is critical that they all focus on open communication and working towards the major company priority of innovation. Innovation is a priority across the company and across all functions. Innovation in all business areas is what drives the company and it is what the structure is based around (Swarovski Website, 2015). This spirit is something that is highlighted in recruitment material, as it is something that is attractive to Generation Y.

Systems

Swarovski maintains its head office and operations in Wattens, Austria. They are one of the biggest employers in Austria and employ almost 5000 people in Tyrol. Their office in Austria specializes in areas ranging from marketing to manufacturing, finance to product management. Although they also have global departments and the organization has main offices around the globe, Austria continues to be the base of from where the organization is run.

From the recruitment standpoint the company is well versed in social media methods for the management of potential future partners. Social media also creates a new communication option where potential recruits can communicate with the company through a tweet, Facebook message, or LinkedIn post. This system allows for a significantly faster flow of information to potential recruits and a more direct way of communicating company needs and goals.

Shared Values

Although each section of the framework is equally as important as the next for the overall success of a company's strategy, shared values is arguably the single most important factor when it comes to the recruitment of Generation Y. Applicants are more likely to be attracted by employers who have a good reputation and embrace corporate values in line with their own (Economist Intelligence Unit). The fact the Swarovski has had a core value of innovation from the conception of the company creates authentic and trustworthy appeal from Generation Y talent. These young workers are looking for greater access to knowledge and collaborative networks so that they can initiate and implement innovative ideas (Nayar, 2013). This is a value already shared and respected throughout the company's culture and therefore can be assumed it will help to achieve results in attracting and retaining talent from Generation Y.

Along with the value of innovation, Swarovski also commits to a high degree of corporate social responsibility and gives back to the community as much as they are capable of. By having a genuine structure already created around this, they have developed as a trustworthy brand to which young talent can relate. A small but significant example of this social responsibility can be seen through a recent tweet sent out by the Swarovski Careers Twitter account sending prayers for Paris in the midst of the terrorist attacks there. This act allows the community to see that the company is not only compassionate, but also shows that their accounts are relevant and not solely for company promotion.

Generation Y seeks out companies that they feel will share the same values as them and will provide them a company culture that allows them to grow and develop their skills. The majority of these young people will decide their opinion of a company as a future employer based on the degree to which a company is seen as an innovative workplace. The fact the Swarovski already has an attitude of welcoming and adapting to the changes innovation brings places them above the competition in this degree.

Style

As already discussed Swarovski as a company and as a brand, is extremely dedicated to a culture that promotes and exemplifies innovation. This is reflected in their leadership style and the communication functions between and amongst teams.

Currently their recruitment style is very much based in the social media medium. Because of their global brand presence and the high traffic through their website, they rarely need to use job boards or paid advertisements, and instead appeal to this generation by using Facebook and Twitter (Burgess, 2014). Having a recruitment style that is current with technology trends allows the company to more successfully recruit employees from Generation Y who are much more technologically savvy.

They are very supportive of the next generation and believe that at the end of the day it's nothing but creativity and innovation that helps their industries move forward, from fashion to art, jewellery, architecture, and design (Swarovski, 2015).

To facilitate open communication and give employees a voice on how improvements can be made, Swarovski began using an employee survey in 2012. With a response rate of 74% the company looked to measure levels of engagement and enablement across the organization. Conducting this survey contributes to the vision Swarovski has of being an attractive employer by identifying the areas where the company is succeeding and where it needs to improve. Based on the results of the survey and its feedback, targeted actions plans are now in place locally and globally (Swarovski Group, 2013). Initiatives like

feedback surveys are crucial to the happiness of Generation Y employees, as they need to be heard, and for their concerns to be recognized, in order to be content in a work place. Swarovski not only has these surveys, but acting on the results demonstrates their responsibility as an employer.

Staff

The continued success of Swarovski is constantly credited to their complex and diverse staff. Being a multi-faceted company they have people operations in many different areas from Retail, Design, Production and Supply Chain to corporate functions such as Sales, Finance, Human Resources, IT, Marketing and Retail Architecture (<https://www.linkedin.com/company/swarovski/careers>).

Swarovski's employs an extremely diverse workforce. Although they have offices and sales units across the globe their head office, which remains today in Wattens, Austria, will be used as a primary example of this. Sixty nationalities and 16 languages were registered as working at the Wattens site in 2012. Female employees represent 43.88% of the staff at Wattens and 2% of their workforce are employees with disabilities. At senior management level 9.23% are female, while at middle management level 32.36% are female (Swarovski Group, 2013).

Diversity is a driving factor of success in today's globalized business world. Culturally diverse work teams are better able to attain high levels of financial profitability and it has been found that work-place coherence can stunt creativity (Ng & Tung, 1998). A broad definition of talent will allow the company to draw on diverse sources of talent to create successful campaigns and procedures.

Skills

Swarovski supports a workplace that maintains a continuous effort to manage and develop their employees' skill sets. Various programs for skills management are offered including internal training courses, funding support for external courses, the provision of sabbatical periods, retraining, and more. Welcoming and encouraging employees to develop and learn new skills works as an intrinsic motivational tool as well as acts as an incentive to stay with the company over a longer period of time. Many Generation Y employees, unlike the previous generations, do not feel an obligation to stay with a company over a long period of time if their career interests are not being advanced. These training programs would create a more long-term orientation in Generation Y workers at the organization.

The use of these programs creates better motivational measures at the company. Motivation is internal to each individual and a self-generated process that causes behaviour to be energized, directed, and sustained. Rather than expecting managers or others to motivate people, the essence of motivation results from redesigning the job so it is motivating (Cunningham, 2015). Having different avenues for skills training (external, internal, sabbatical, etc.) allows each employee to direct their own training path to ensure maximum satisfaction and overall engagement.

Performance of employees at Swarovski is monitored with performance appraisals to 100% of office employees (Swarovski Group, 2013). The size of the company makes the monitoring of skills important to future success. As stated in the above writing, the company not only carries out performance appraisals, but they also consult their employees through discussions and surveys to assess how progress is being made.

Being a global company, management at Swarovski must ensure that it is developing its employees' skills among its many countries of operation. The Swarovski Leadership Academy acts as a Competence Center for Leadership and helps to develop leadership skills and shape leadership culture. In 2012, the Swarovski Leadership Academy delivered 23 academy classes to 312 participants from 26 countries (Swarovski Group, 2013). This academy allows the skills of worldwide employees to be developed while continuing to stay true to the company's overall corporate culture and values.

CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Looking at a global company like Swarovski it is crucial that cultural dimensions are analyzed so that the company can develop best practices for its employees and consumers all over the world. Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions offers a framework to compare the culture of various countries and how each individual country responds to workplace culture. This paper will analyze five of the model's dimensions below in how they relate to Austria, the headquarter country, and how that affects their global identity.

Power Distance

Power distance is defined as the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally (Hofstede, 2015). Austria scores an extremely low score of 11 in this dimension. This categorizes them as a country where workers value their independence, superiors are accessible, and hierarchy is for convenience only. Control is disliked in this culture, as power is generally decentralized as managers look to the experience of their team. Additionally, communication styles would be both informal and direct within a company in Austria.

The above characteristics very much suit the overall attitude of Swarovski as a company. This isn't a surprise as they were founded and continue to be based out of Austria. However they do work to ensure this style is representative of this management across the globe. This can become difficult in Arab and Asian countries where power distance is generally quite high, but utilizing training programs for leadership can help ease this difference. Generation Y would find the low-level power distance within this company appealing. Having open communication, independence and little to no hierarchy is something that they value in work and this would make Swarovski an employer of choice.

Individualism

Individualism has to do with whether people's self-image is defined in terms of "I" or "We". It is the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members (Hofstede, 2015). Austria scores right in the middle in this category. This creates a high preference for a loosely knit social framework where individuals are expected to take care of themselves. In terms of work-based decisions this culture would promote contracts based on mutual advantage and promotion or hiring decisions would be based on merit only. Although there can be some degree of "in-groups" and taking care of one another, in general the working culture is based around individual goals.

Austria's stance in individualism would meet Generation Y's general need to receive validation for the work they have accomplished as individuals (Erickson, 2009). However, Generation Y also is comfortable in very collaborative and open environments. Swarovski, although overall fits in Austria's ranking of Individualism, continuously works in collaborative teams and has open communication among management and individuals. As a global company being in a fairly middle ground in this dimension, it allows them to relate to both ends of the spectrum and communicate appropriately with global partners.

Masculinity

Societies that are driven by competition, success, and being defined as a 'winner' are ones that can be described as having a high ranking of the Masculinity dimension (Hofstede, 2015). Austria is a very masculine society. With a score of 79 they are highly success oriented and driven. In masculine countries people "live in order to work" and there is an emphasis on competition and performance. This competitive value generally starts in school and continues throughout organizational life.

Globally it is hard to insert a competitive nature in those countries which are much more feminine and therefore Swarovski must ensure different motivational measures are put in place in these locations. Although ambitious, Generation Y graduates put great value into having a work-life balance and only basing value in work success is not enough to keep them engaged. Multiple studies find that a good work-life balance ranks as high as 3rd most important in a Generation Y'ers working life (Syrett, 2014). Swarovski found in its 2012 employee survey that in terms of work-life balance they are currently below the level of global high-performing companies. Therefore, they have begun to work on specific initiatives to allow employees greater flexibility, which should lead to a better work-life balance and reduced stress (Swarovski Group, 2013).

Uncertainty Avoidance

Uncertainty Avoidance can be defined as the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by ambiguous or unknown situations and have created beliefs and institutions that try to avoid these (Hofstede, 2015). Austria has a high preference for avoiding uncertainty as reflected in its score of 70 in this dimension. Cultures with high scores are intolerant of unorthodox behaviour, have an emotional need for rules, precision and punctuality are the norm, and innovation may be resisted.

Resistance of innovation conflicts with the core of Swarovski's company culture. The term "innovative spirit" is used constantly on their website and throughout company information. Although they value precision and work within rules, overall the company does not match up with its country's ranking. Not fitting into their country's norm allows them to be extremely attractive to Generation Y, who thrives on innovation and companies that value and encourage those pursuits. Taking this culture globally may prove difficult as they agree with some definitions of this dimension and vastly oppose others. The key for Swarovski will be ensuring the value of innovation is maintained to wherever they expand. Additionally they will need to recognize that rule-based structures may need to be relaxed in countries with low uncertainty avoidance. Having less stress placed on rules will also be beneficial in other locations when encouraging innovation – as a stress on both innovation and rules would be very unclear.

Long Term Orientation

Long Term Orientation describes how societies prioritize maintaining links with their own past while dealing with the challenges of the present and future (Hofstede, 2015). Austria, who ranks relevantly high in this dimension, is a pragmatic culture that encourages efforts in modern education to prepare for the future. Traditions are adapted easily to changing conditions and there is a tendency to be thrifty in achieving results.

As a Global company Swarovski must ensure that when moving to countries with a lower score they show a respect for traditions. These more opposite cultures are more focused on quick results and maintaining time-honoured traditions. Generation Y, although not attached to traditions, is keen on seeing quick

results and is likely to become bored or frustrated without visible progress. Swarovski's openness to any kind of innovation would allow the development of ideas whether quick or long-term and new or based in tradition. This creates an environment where, regardless of culture, employees are able to approach problems or ideas in a way with which that they are comfortable.

Conclusions

Cultural dimensions play a key role in the success of a company's international expansion. Austria as a country is extreme on the cultural spectrum of both Power Distance, particularly low, and Masculinity, exceptionally high. Where these extremes may cause difficulty in global reach, measures can be taken to reduce the risk factors that these tendencies bring. With such decentralized power and direct communication as a norm, global managers can work to ensure employees feel comfortable in a more collaborative environment. Additionally with a strong competitive nature in Austria, it is important to ensure that quality of life is high for employees in more feminine cultures, as this is what will be successful in their motivation.

After analysis above it can be determined that Swarovski's culture as a whole generally aligns with that of Austria. The major distinction is when it comes to the company's strong emphasis on innovation against Austria's general preference to strong rules. However, this attention to innovation and drift from typical country norms is a crucial characteristic in the overall long-term success of Swarovski's Human Resource strategy. Generation Y is both motivated and engaged through innovative freedom in their work and Swarovski's culture is therefore a major strength in their recruitment process. Understanding cultural dimensions is vital to the success of a globalized company. The company carries values and has standards that would generally be smooth to transition into new markets. Furthermore, their history of innovation has allowed the company to present principles that increase the company's prospect of being seen as a good "fit" by Generation Y recruits. This cultural fit with recruits will carry into successful retention of talent in the long-term.

COMPETITORS

The luxury jewellery market is particularly competitive; top brands include Tiffany & Co., Cartier, and Harry Winston. Additionally they are in the market with Pandora and brands that meet less extravagant consumer wants. Swarovski must work to not only position themselves in the consumer market, but also as an appealing employer in the job market. Tiffany and Pandora will be discussed as competitors in attracting top talent to the company.

Tiffany

One of Swarovski's biggest competitors in the luxury jewellery market is Tiffany & Co. The company was founded in 1837 and is headquartered in New York City. In sharp contrast to innovative values that Swarovski holds, Tiffany & Co. promotes excellence based in the company's tradition and history. Employee engagement is high at Tiffany & Co. and they work to help employees achieve a strong work-life balance. The Healthy Tiffany and Everyday Resources program supports Tiffany employees in classes and services ranging from meditation and nutrition to confidential family counselling (Tiffany & Co., 2014) Swarovski has an advantage over Tiffany & Co. in their established value of innovation that they share with incoming Generation Y employees and recruits. However, Tiffany has a better position as an employer who promotes and assists in work-life balance, another major value of Generation Y workers. Swarovski has recognized the significance in work-life balance and is currently working to improve its position in this area.

Pandora

Pandora is an international jewellery manufacturer founded in 1982 in Copenhagen, Denmark. Their company culture is based in the values of “Pride, Passion, and Performance.” They focus on the importance of individuals while maintaining low hierarchy and place a high importance on the diversity of its employees. They are currently working on a range of initiatives to ensure that no gender should account for less than 35% of board members and the gender split in senior management positions should be at least 40% (Pandora, 2013).

While Swarovski very much values diversity, compared to Pandora it misses the mark with gender diversity. In their last survey 9.23% of senior management was female, while females in middle management made up 32.36% of the workforce. In comparison to Pandora, having women account for 50% of Vice Presidents, Swarovski needs to work to be more gender inclusive. However, Swarovski does have an advantage over Pandora in that they are better known globally and have a stronger brand presence when it comes to recruitment. Swarovski and Pandora share a weak hierarchical structure, which is something that appeals to Generation Y’s ideal leadership structure.

RECOMMENDATION

Recruitment is often the focus in Human Resource strategies, however it is crucial that retention strategies are also considered for long-term success. Employees from Generation Y are often branded as job hoppers and the majority of Millennials expect that they will stay at a job for three years or less (Meister, 2012). Hiring managers should not look at this trend as a reason to avoid hiring this Generation; a strategy such as that would create a great loss of current talent for the company. However, because of this trend, it is imperative that retention strategies are implemented throughout human resource procedures. New employees require a sizable investment of time and resources, and losing an employee before this investment pays off is immensely detrimental to overall company success.

Successful retention of employees from Generation Y requires that a company ensures employees constantly feel fulfilled by the work they are completing. Job fulfillment is more important to Generation Y workers than it has been to any previous generation and the desire for this is what often leads to the job-hopping tendency. Therefore a recommendable strategy is to allow employees to contribute creatively and have their ideas heard. Swarovski currently has some systems in place for this (employee surveys), but creating a more comprehensive and easily accessible communication plan would support the advancement of employee ideas. Additionally, higher flexibility at work is likely to increase engagement and satisfaction of employees. Understanding and allowing flexible hours, when they are needed, is an excellent and simple step that Swarovski can take to maintain company commitment. However, what is possibly the most important step in creating long-term retention of employees is communicating the company’s values from the very beginning of the recruiting process. Generation Y recruits believe that a positive and shared company culture is one essential. By communicating values during the recruitment process employees that don’t see themselves fitting in with the culture will likely remove themselves from the process before any investment is made. Overall Generation Y is more difficult to retain than the previous generation, who were more focused on security, but the growth they can bring to a company are worth developing a stronger retention strategy.

A credible recruitment strategy that Swarovski should consider developing is becoming an Employer of Choice. An Employer of Choice describes a workplace which all people find attractive. It can be specifically designed to be attractive to one designated group, in this case Generation Y, however a workplace that is

supportive and focuses on this strategy is likely to be attractive to all groups. Such a workplace works to recognize what people value and need in their work to be happy; generally this includes a supportive work environment, challenging work, work-life balance, opportunity for achievement and a company with high values (Cunningham, 2015). The idea of being an Employer of Choice is like developing a brand for the organization as a great place to work in the minds of recruits as well as current employees. When a company is successful in this strategy online recruitment is vastly improved, as employees will search out the company without being approached. If Swarovski markets itself as a good employer, people will come to them, achieving improved recruitment results while also improving overall company satisfaction. Additionally, companies that use language and terms such as striving to be an Employer of Choice indicate their vision of being an ideal employer and thus become more attractive overall. It is a tactical move for Swarovski to work on incorporating being an Employer of Choice into recruitment strategies. They can quickly add their company to nomination lists for awards such as Top Employers for Young People, Most Innovative Company, and other awards that would improve brand image. Even without winning, this movement towards improvement will be acknowledged.

Swarovski is a well-established brand and they continue to be successful through utilizing their top talent. It is recommended that Swarovski increases its promotion of having an innovative spirit and uses technology as a major recruitment method. As the company continues to develop on a global level and recruit talent with demands they have yet to encounter, it will be central to their success that employee engagement and fulfillment are valued. Recruitment and retention are likely to be positive if future and current employees feel that they are appreciated by the company and fit in with its culture.

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